THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) and (b) Federation of Indian Chambers of commerce and Industry (FICC) had prepared a background paper for their workshop on "Towards Capital Account Convertibility—2000 AD—held on July 11, 1997 at New Delhi. In this paper one of the suggestions was as follows:—

"Financial sector needs to be strengthened and prudential norms of accounting and transparency should be put in place. The skills of financial professionals especially in the financial services and banking sector need to be upgraded so that they are able to face the new environment. The laws must be changed to allow new instruments such as futures forwards and securitised debt so that economic agents can hedge risks. This will harmonise our hedging instruments with global ones."

(c) Reform in the financial sector in India is a continuing process and every worthwhile suggestion constitutes an input in that process. Considerable progress has been made in the matter of prudential norms of accounting and transparancy.

Excise duty evasion by Golden Tobacco company

2248. SHRIMATI JAYAPARADA NAHATA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Golden Tobacco Company has evaded excise duty of hundreds of crores;

(b) the facts of the case;

(c) whether officials of the Central Excise and Customs Department have been found to be involved in conniving with the company; and

(d) the action taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) and (b) A case of central excise duty evasion has been detected against M/s Shree Chandra Tobacco Ltd., a franchise unit of M/s Golden Tobacco Company Ltd. during the search operation in February, 1996. Based on the investigations carried out by the Directorate General of Anti-Evasion, a show cause notice has been issued in August, 1996 to M/s. Shree Chandra Tobacco Ltd. and M/s. Golden Tabocco Company Ltd. for alleged evasion of central excise duty of Rs. 18.76 crores. In addition, cases of evasion of central excise duty have been detected against M/s Golden Tobacco Company Ltd. and their frenchise units during 1995 and show cause notices demanding central excise duty of Rs. 364.86 crores were issued to these units.

(c) and (d) One Assistant Commissioner, 19 Superintendants and 25 Inspectors have been placed under suspension for their suspected connivance with the said Company.

Setting up of Air Intelligence Unit

2249. SMT. JAYAPRADA NAHATA:

DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR:

DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up an Air Intelligence Unit;

(b) if so, the airports to be checked against smuggling and other illegal activities; and

(c) other steps proposed to check against economic offences which are on the rise in the country?

THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) and (b) Air Intelligence Units (AIUs) of Customs are already functioning at the respective International airports. AIUs are engaged in gathering intelligence and taking specific action to prevent and check smuggling activities.

(c) Field formations are alert to detect & prevent economic offences in the country. Specific measure taken includes targeting of intelligence surveillance over sensitive area to curb smuggling; setting up of Directorate of Valuation to detect cases of customs under-valuation; strict and deterrent action is taken against the persons found involved in smuggling & economic offences.

राष्ट्रीय स्वर्ण बांड का भुगतान

2250. श्री महेश्वर सिंह : क्या वित्त मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या यह सच है कि राष्ट्रीय स्वर्ण बांड का भुगतान भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक की दिल्ली स्थित शाखा को स्वर्ण बांड प्रस्तुत करने पर किया जाएगा ;

(ख) यदि हां, तो स्वर्ण बांड प्राप्ति हेतु 30 अगस्त, 1996 से लेकर आज तक दिल्ली स्थित कार्यालय को हिमाचल प्रदेश के कुल्लू जिले से प्राप्त मामले का ब्यौरा क्या है ; और

(ग) किस-किस देवता का सोना लौटाया गया है ?

वित्त मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री सतपाल महाराज) : (क) जी, हां । कुल्लू जिले के मंदिर, जिन्होंने राष्ट्रीय रक्षा स्वर्ण बांड योजना, 1980 में निवेश किया था, विधिवत उन्मोचित बांड प्रस्तुत करके भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक नई दिल्ली कार्यालय में पुनर्अदायगी के दावे कर सकते हैं ।

(ख) और (ग) निम्नलिखित दो मंदिरों ने वापसी भुगतान के लिए बांड प्रस्तुत कर दिए हैं :—

(i) देवता पनेवी नाग—7 ग्राम

(ii) कारदार देवता पछला देवी—16 ग्राम

उपर्युक्त मंदिरों को क्रमश: 13-6-97 और 3-7-1997 को सुपुर्दगी के आदेश जारी कर दिए गए थे, परन्तु उन्होंने अभी तक सोने की सुपुर्दगी नहीं ली है ।

Shortage of coins in the country

2251. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 721 given in the Rajya Sabha on 29th July, 1997 and state:

(a) whether there is shortage of Rupees two, Rupee one and fifty paise coins in certain parts of the country and the Reserve Bank is rationing the limited stocks available with it, as reported in the "Deccan Chronicle" dated 4th June, 1997 (Hyderabad Edition); and

(b) if so, the specific reasons for the shortage of these coins?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) and (b) There is a temporary shortage of coins in different denominations. The present capacity of the Mints is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the coins in the country. As a short term measure, Government has decided to import 700 million pieces of Re. 1 coins and 300 millon pieces of Rs. 2 coins. As a long term measure, the Government Mints are being modernised and upgraded to enhance their capacity. In order to cater to the maximum number of people, Reserve Bank of India offices are sometimes constrainend to ration the coins issued over their counters.